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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES-IHB (CHARLES PATTERSON AND SUSAN BOGGESS), NEA/ELA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KSTH](#) [PGOV](#) [EAGR](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPT: DECEMBER 2009 INFLUENZA UPDATE

Ref: Cairo 2103

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

1.(SBU) Key Points:

--Dr. Samir Refaey, the Minister of Health (MoH)'s executive director for disease surveillance, characterized Egypt as adequately prepared for an expected increase in H1N1 influenza cases in the next three months.

--As of December 19, 2009, MoH has reported 6,847 confirmed H1N1 cases with 93 fatalities.

--MoH's National Severity Index - which measures influenza's impact on the country - has risen from normal to moderate conditions due to the rise in H1N1 cases and deaths.

¶2. (U) ESTHoff met with Dr. Samir Refaey, MoH's executive director of disease surveillance, on December 21 to discuss GoE planning and preparation for the winter influenza season. Refaey is the MoH's point person on influenza issues and advises Health Minister Hatem El-Gabaly.

¶3. (SBU) According to Refaey, MoH has confirmed 6,847 H1N1 cases with 89 fatalities as of December 19. He noted that 80% of all cases have been reported in the last two months (November and December). Refaey attributed this recent surge partly to the winter weather but also noted MoH has begun allowing privately-owned laboratories - and not just MoH facilities - to screen for H1N1. This has led to an increase in influenza testing; MoH estimates that 60-70% of all confirmed H1N1 cases now come from private laboratory reporting.

¶4. (SBU) MoH has raised the alert level for the National Severity Index, a tracking system that monitors influenza's impact on the country. Refaey explained that the sharp increase in H1N1 cases coupled with a rise in the mortality rate (which now stands slightly above 1% for all confirmed cases) triggered the change from normal to moderate influenza conditions. (Note: In the color coded index, green corresponds to normal while yellow represents a moderate influenza situation. End Note)

¶5. (SBU) Noting that no country is ever completely ready, Refaey stated MoH is currently "satisfied with its preparations" for the winter influenza season. He advised that MoH possesses 1 million doses of H1N1 vaccine, having received 450,000 doses earlier in the week. MoH has instructed hospitals to increase space for intensive care units and the number of ventilators available for patients with more severe H1N1 symptoms. Refaey also explained that MoH has stepped up its influenza media campaign, which encourages individuals to seek immediate treatment if they display influenza-like symptoms. He noted this message has played a critical role in lowering the country's H5N1 (avian influenza) mortality rate, which stands at 10% for all confirmed cases this

year (40 cases, resulting in 4 deaths), far below the global rate of 66%.

Scobey